DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 430 632 JC 990 313

TITLE Welfare Enrollments and the Start-up of Workfirst Wage and Skill Progression Training. Research Report No. 99-2.

INSTITUTION Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Olympia. Education Div.

PUB DATE 1999-03-00

NOTE 12p.

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Basic Skills; *Community Colleges; English (Second Language); *Enrollment; Home Management; *Job Training; Literacy; Program Development; Student Financial Aid; *Technical Institutes; Tuition; *Two Year College Students; Two Year Colleges; Wages; *Welfare Recipients

IDENTIFIERS *Washington Community and Technical Colleges

ABSTRACT

This report focuses on total welfare enrollments in two-year colleges and the enrollments in four new WorkFirst training programs that started in fall 1998. The new programs initiate a wage and skill progression strategy that gets WorkFirst students started in better jobs than they could find without training and helps them to advance in employment and earnings. WorkFirst training programs include: (1) tuition assistance; (2) pre-employment training, which is geared to specific employer hiring standards and targets employers ready to hire WorkFirst participants; (3) adult basic education and English as a Second Language for employers who have low-wage workers; and (4) literacy development that targets WorkFirst families with young, at-risk children to help parents gain literacy, family management, and employability skills to prepare for work. General findings are that: (1) welfare FTE enrollments have fallen 58% since 1995; (2) for the first time, colleges are providing more training for past welfare recipients than for adults on welfare; (3) students this fall were more likely to attend part-time and in the evening than in past years; (4) only one-third of the welfare students were enrolled in occupational programs; the majority were looking for basic skills, personal development, or to remedial instruction; and (5) the majority of the students in the WorkFirst programs are low-income/low-wage earning adults. Contains 13 tables. (AS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 430 632

Welfare Enrollments and the Start-up of Workfirst Wage and Skill Progression Training

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

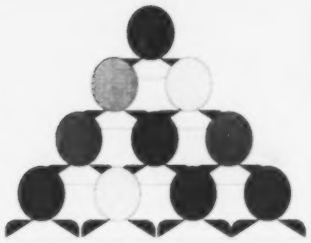
JC 990 313

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
L. Sepannen
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE



Research Report
No. 99-2

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Education Division

WELFARE ENROLLMENTS AND THE START-UP OF WORKFIRST WAGE AND SKILL PROGRESSION TRAINING

March 1999

BACKGROUND

This report focuses on total welfare enrollments in two-year colleges and the enrollments in four new WorkFirst training programs that started in fall. The new programs are a major focus of attention for initiating a wage and skill progression strategy that gets WorkFirst students started in better jobs than they could find without training and helps them to advance in employment and earnings. The programs represent the first steps for integrating training into other WorkFirst services that heretofore have exclusively focused on the requirement for welfare recipients to look for and take the first available job they can get before considering training needs and opportunities. In addition to serving WorkFirst students, the programs may enroll low-income/low-wage earning adults so that former WorkFirst participants may continue to get the training they need and adults at-risk for going on welfare may be helped as well.

The new WorkFirst training programs include:

- Tuition Assistance provides tuition and support for working WorkFirst participants and low wage working students who need skill training to advance or prepare for better jobs;
- Pre-employment Training is short-term training geared to specific employer hiring standards and targeted to employers ready to hire WorkFirst participants;
- Workplace Basics provides adult basic education and English as a second language for employers who have low wage workers; and
- Families That Work builds on the whole family focus of the Even Start literacy program by targeting WorkFirst families with young, at-risk children and helping parents gain literacy, family management and employability skills to prepare for work.

TC990313

For Information Contact:
David Prince, Manager, Research and Analysis
Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
P O Box 42495, Olympia WA 98504-2495
Phone: 360-753-1566 Email: dprince@sbctc.ctc.edu
TDD 360-753-3680

Each program may work alone or in combinations with the other programs. For example, pre-employment training is intended to provide better employment opportunities than would be available to welfare job-seekers through job search alone. It also provides a connection to training with possibilities to add tuition assistance once participants go to work.

Prior to WorkFirst, colleges played a longstanding role in training and preparing welfare students for employment. The Job Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS) program that preceded WorkFirst encouraged welfare recipients to attend college to increase their job skills and prepare for work. Welfare students who started college before fall 1997 under the old JOBS program were permitted to complete their programs. In fall 1998, this transition period ended and the new requirements for up front job search and time limits on assistance were in effect for all WorkFirst participants. Overall welfare student enrollments fell dramatically.

At the same time, the new WorkFirst programs began full implementation this fall. Each program has specific enrollment targets that are being reported regularly to the Governor's WorkFirst subcabinet. Training completions, employment and earnings outcomes will begin to be reported at the end of winter quarter. Post-program employment and earnings will be reported next January for students completing training by June 30, 1999.

Summary of Findings Fall Quarter Welfare Enrollments and Implementation of New WorkFirst Programs through Fall Quarter

- Welfare FTE enrollments are continuing to decline. Total college welfare FTEs have fallen 58 percent since fall quarter 1995. Headcount enrollments have fallen at about the same rate. In fall 1998 there were 7,700 total welfare students enrolled in two-year colleges. They were enrolled for 5,500 FTEs. Even before WorkFirst, the number of adults receiving welfare began falling and with fewer adults receiving welfare there was fewer welfare students. However, WorkFirst has accelerated the decline in welfare student enrollments.

- This fall for the first time, colleges provided more training for past welfare recipients than to adults on welfare. The pattern has changed. Whereas prior to this year welfare recipients came to college first to get the skills for work, this fall for the first time more past-welfare students enrolled in college. Nearly 9,000 students enrolled in fall quarter who had received welfare sometime in the prior two years. This marked the first time this group was larger than the welfare student group. Low income students with recent welfare experience increased 26 percent over the year before. Under WorkFirst, enrollments of past-welfare students have accelerated as they enrolled in colleges for skills to be more employable and stay off welfare.

- How serving welfare students is changing. Welfare students are also being served differently in colleges. This fall they were more likely than in prior years to attend part-time and evening following general college trends in serving more working adults. WorkFirst students were even more likely to attend in the evening. Welfare students in fall 1998 also were more likely to receive basic skills instruction than in the past. The percentage of welfare students receiving financial aid declined even with the new form of aid, work-based tuition assistance. Of those who did get aid, more were doing college work-study than in prior years.

- Welfare students enrolled fall quarter were focusing on quite varied areas of improvement. Less than one-third were majoring in occupational areas and only 10 percent of all those enrolled were focused on higher wage occupational programs. The majority was enrolled for basic skills as a final goal or other types of training including getting themselves ready for college-level work or personal development.

- The new WorkFirst programs began full implementation in fall with mixed results for enrolling participants as policy changes that allowed training were slowly integrated into local WorkFirst services. Combined, the new WorkFirst programs enrolled about 1,600 students in fall quarter. Both basic skills programs are well on track to exceed their enrollment targets for the first year. The Tuition Assistance program has reached 67 percent of its target enrollment. One thousand students received the aid in fall quarter. At the end of fall, 96 students were enrolled in pre-employment programs for 16 percent of the enrollment target. By the start of winter quarter 320 students were enrolled, making cumulative enrollment 18 percent of the target.

- The majority of students in the new programs are low-income/low-wage-earning adults. Programs can serve low-income adults so that they are not drawn into welfare to receive services and so WorkFirst participants have training available to them after they go to work and leave welfare. The State Board has set an internal goal to target 65 percent WorkFirst participants the first year. The focus of each program drives this mix differently. Nearly three in four of the participants in pre-employment training are in WorkFirst. Families That Work is serving more than 76 percent WorkFirst participants. Just under one-third (31 percent) of the students receiving tuition assistance are in WorkFirst. This percentage is increasing the longer the program is in place. Workplace Basics is focusing entirely on low-wage workers.

- Outcomes for the college programs will begin to be reported after winter quarter. Each program has a specific completion target and will also report post-completion employment and earnings. The first outcomes to be reported will include early results from pre-employment and workplace basics programs that have completed. Tuition assistance completions will be reported in July. Based upon fall quarter, it appears it will easily meet its completion target. In spring UI matching will be used to look at the employment and earnings of students while they are attending college. Families That Work completions will also be reported in July. Post-program employment and earnings will be reported in January 2000 for all projects.

CONCLUSIONS

The first WorkFirst programs integrating training into the WorkFirst "any job" strategy began full implementation this fall. One program, Tuition Assistance, had some earlier enrollments. The total enrollment for fall quarter in all four programs was about 1,600 students. The two basic skills programs will exceed their enrollment targets. Tuition assistance enrollments are increasing and the program can reach most of its goal if it continues at its present rate of growth. Pre-employment training, however, is significantly below the target.

There has been a swing in college enrollments from serving welfare students to serving more students who were formerly on welfare. Overall, as welfare student headcount has fallen, more past welfare students have been enrolling in school to help them stay off welfare and be more employable. This change reinforces the need to focus on low income students in the wage and skill progression strategy.

The ways welfare students are being served is changing as well for those who may be working and for those who may be the so-called harder-to-serve. More welfare students are receiving evening instruction. WorkFirst students receiving tuition assistance are even more likely to be attending evenings. On the other hand, the percentage needing basic skills instruction is also increasing, indicating the hard-to-serve group may be even more in need of training before going to work.

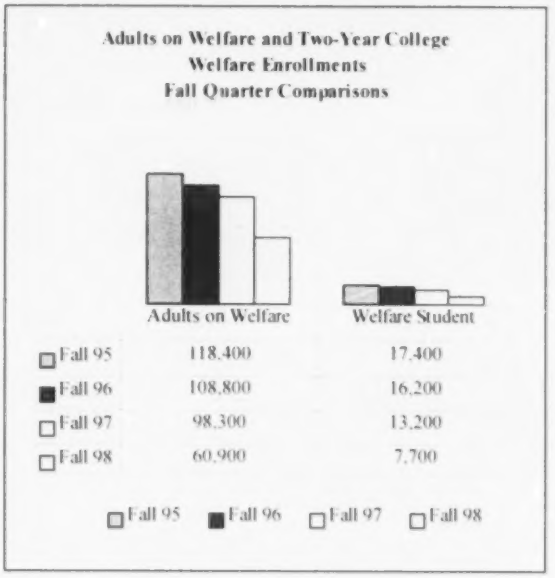
Subsequent reports will focus on outcomes including employment and earnings.

ANALYSIS

The Percent of Adults on Welfare Enrolled in Two-Year Colleges in Fall 1998 Compared to Past Enrollments

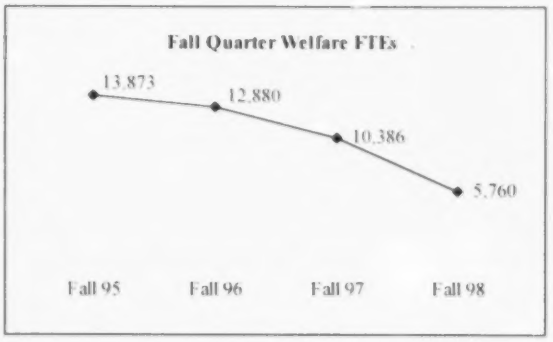
Welfare headcount enrollments have been declining for several years. WorkFirst has added to and accelerated the decline. With new requirements for up front job search and limits on the length of time a family can receive assistance, the number of adults on welfare fell 38 percent from 98,000 adults in fall 1997 to 61,000 adults in fall 1998. Welfare enrollments in two-year colleges declined 41 percent in this period.

In fall 1995 there were over 17,000 welfare students enrolled fall quarter. In fall 1997 welfare enrollments declined to 13,180 welfare students. The annual decline was moderate, following good employment conditions between 1995 and 1997.


Adults on Welfare and Two-Year College
Welfare Enrollments
Fall Quarter Comparisons
Adults on Welfare
Welfare Student
Fall 95 118,400 17,400
Fall 96 108,800 16,200
Fall 97 98,300 13,200
Fall 98 60,900 7,700
Fall 95 Fall 96 Fall 97 Fall 98

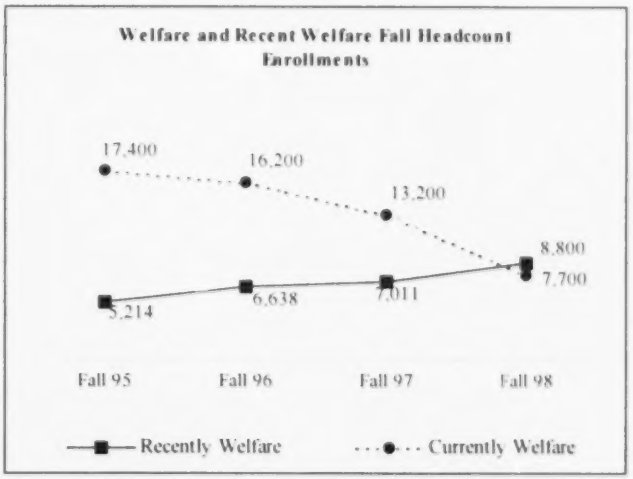
Fall Welfare Full-Time Equivalent Enrollment

Welfare FTEs (all fund sources) have been falling along with welfare enrollments. FTEs began to fall off sharply in fall 1997 as WorkFirst was being planned and welfare students became uncertain about their continued enrollment in college. Welfare FTEs fell dramatically this fall along with the significant enrollment drop.



Headcount Enrollment of Recent Welfare and Welfare Students

For the first time this fall there were more recent welfare students enrolled than there were welfare students. In fall 1998 8,800 students were enrolled who had received welfare sometime in the prior two years. This was an increase of 26 percent over the prior year. Overall as welfare student headcounts have fallen, more recent welfare students have been enrolling in school to help them stay off welfare and be more employable.



Welfare Students Served

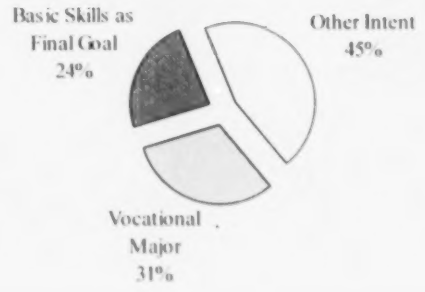
The typical welfare student is a female, a single parent, and attending to improve her basic skills or for employment preparation. Examining enrollments for the past three years, the following changes occurred this fall: part-time and evening enrollments increased and those enrolled were more likely to receive basic skills instruction. The overall percent of welfare students who receive financial aid decreased even though a new aid source, tuition assistance, was added in fall quarter. At the same time more welfare students are engaged in work-study.

	Fall 96	Fall 97	Fall 98
Part-Time	32%	32%	37%
Evening	13%	14%	17%
Basic Skills	34%	34%	41%
Financial Aid	47%	48%	42%
Work-Study	7%	8%	11%

The Percent of Welfare Students Focused on Vocational Training and Other Areas

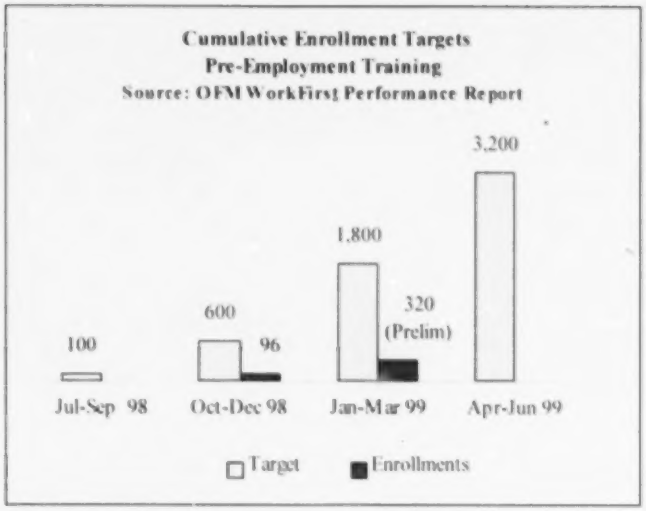
Welfare students enrolled fall quarter were focusing on quite varied areas of improvement with less than one-third majoring in occupational areas. Traditionally, welfare students that have enrolled in colleges have attended for a variety of personal purposes and the majority has received other types of training, sometimes getting themselves ready for college-level work, but just as often looking to improve for other reasons. In fall 1998 about one-quarter of all those enrolled (24 percent) were attending with basic skills as their final goal. Of the others, academic transfer and personal development, including parenting classes, were the students' final goals.

Percent of Welfare Students Focused on Vocational Training and Other Areas of Educational Development Fall Quarter 1998



Only one-third of the welfare students enrolled in fall quarter 1998 declared an intent for a specific vocational major and only about 10 percent of all welfare students were actually focused on training in a high wage area. Higher wage programs are those in occupations where typically graduates earn $11 per hour or more. Two-thirds of the welfare students with vocational majors were in training areas that had median wages for employment between $5.00 to $10.99 per hour. The largest area of training for those with a vocational major was in the low-wage occupation-administrative assistant (5 percent of all welfare students). Three percent of all welfare students were in high wage nursing majors. Other vocational majors of choice included early childhood education and social services.

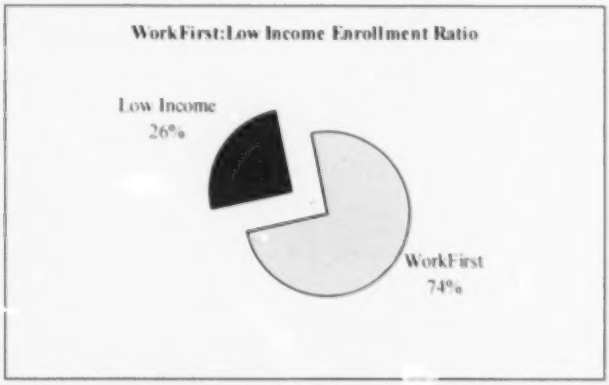
SBCTC Measure for Enrollments in Pre-Employment Training



Pre-employment training is intended to create employment opportunities for WorkFirst participants with above average wages for the area. 320 students were enrolled through February based upon preliminary reports. The project will reach less than 50 percent of its June enrollment target.

Eleven training providers started programs by January 1999. This included two private training institutions. Training is being provided for a wide variety of positions that include: bus driver, hotel attendant, food production, daycare worker, health aide, manufacturing worker, truck driver and office worker.

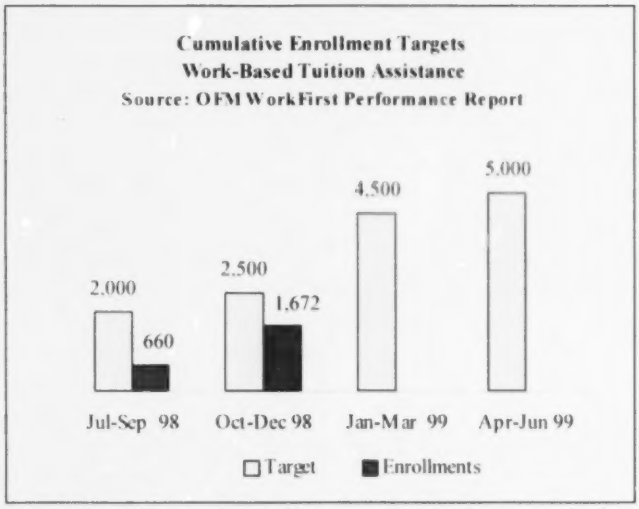
Performance through winter quarter has focused on cumulative enrollments which are reported regularly to the WorkFirst sub-cabinet. The cumulative enrollment through the start of winter quarter is 320 enrollments which is less than 18 percent of the target. Seventy-four (74) percent of those enrolled are WorkFirst participants.



Outcome Goal: SBCTC has a target that 2,080 students (65 percent of those enrolled) will successfully complete training and be hired. Completions will begin to be reported in April for the first projects that finish. Post-program employment and earnings will be reported in January 2000 for all students who complete by June 30, 1999.

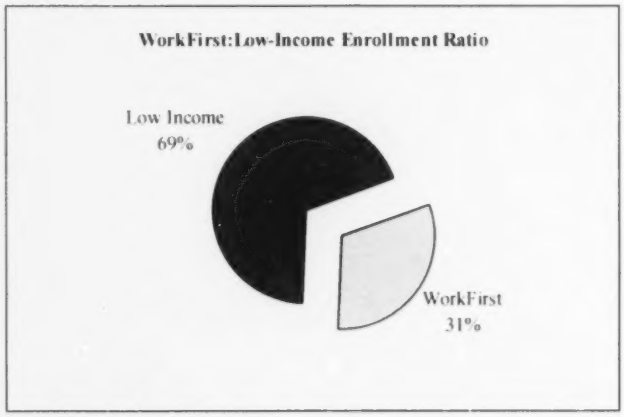
SBCTC Measure for Enrollments in Work-Based Learning Tuition Assistance

The enrollment target for tuition assistance is 5,000 participants by June 1999. Through fall quarter the system was at 67 percent of its enrollment target. Nearly 1,700 participants have received tuition assistance. This includes 660 participants who received assistance in spring and summer 1998 and 1,000 students enrolled in fall. Early enrollments tended to be for just one quarter as the program had a late start in the last academic year. The fall group will be tracked closely for re-enrollment in winter to learn more about how well these students are balancing work, family, and school.



Using fall quarter as a snapshot, 25 percent of the instruction was provided in evening classes, early evidence that colleges are beginning to re-design courses and programs for working WorkFirst/low income students. The typical student took one to two classes.

Thirty-one percent of the total students who received assistance to date were in WorkFirst. The percent of WorkFirst has increased from its start. About 25 percent of the first students enrolled were WorkFirst. In fall quarter this increased to 33 percent.



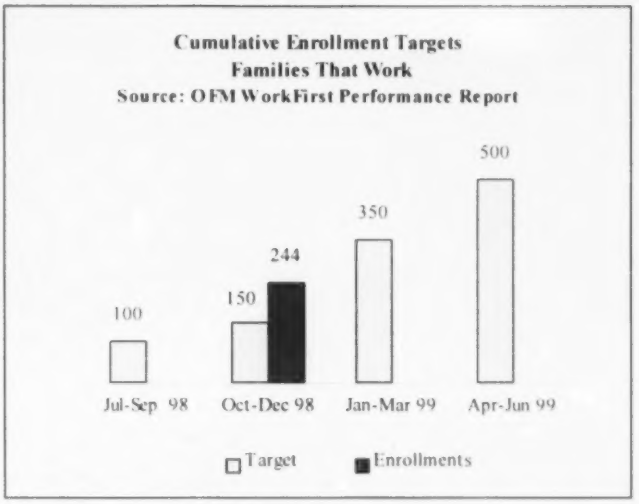
Outcome Goal: SBCTC has set a threshold for 10 credits earned by June as the progress target for students working towards degrees and certificates or completing an individual training plan developed at the college. It appears this target will be exceeded. Of the 1,000 students enrolled in fall, 53 percent earned at least 10 credits or completed an individual plan.

Employment and earnings of students while attending college will begin to be reported at the end of spring quarter. Post-employment and earnings will be reported in January 2000 for those who met the credit threshold by June 30, 1999.

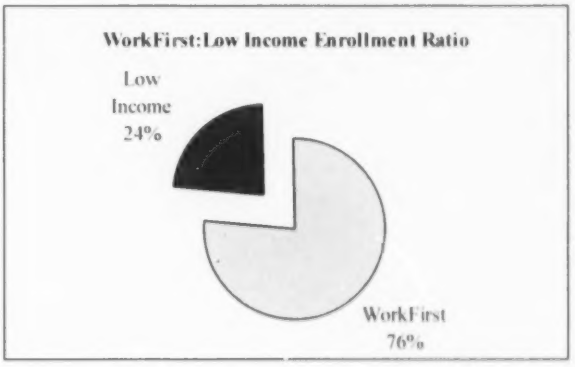
SBCTC Measure for Enrollments in Families That Work

Families That Work has a first year enrollment target for 500 students and will meet its target. It enrolled 244 students though the end of fall quarter compared to an enrollment target of 140.

As time goes on, many practitioners predict the WorkFirst population that isn't employed will be harder to prepare for employment. FTW is a barometer of that population. Seventy (70) percent of the parents entering the program were not ready for immediate employment and referred directly to FTW as a first step.



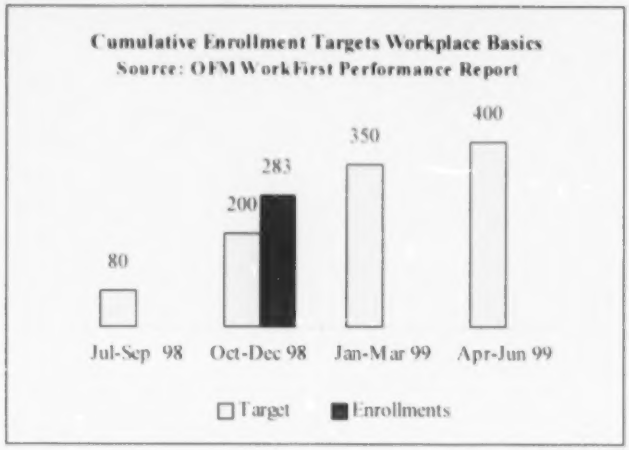
Seventy-six (76) percent of those served were WorkFirst parents.



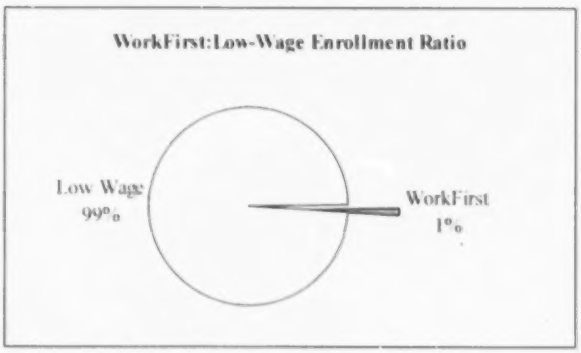
Outcome Goal: A student must demonstrate a number of things to complete Families That Work. They must show gains in their basic skills and in their family management skills. In addition, by the last quarter enrolled they must be doing a 25-hour work activity with their participation in Families That Work. Work activities may include being in job training, doing a work experience, or getting or maintaining employment. SBCTC has a goal that 50 percent of the students will complete by June 30, 1999. Post employment and earnings will be reported in January 2000.

SBCTC Measure for Enrollments in Workplace Basics

The enrollment target for Workplace Basics is 400 participants enrolled by June 1999. The enrollment in these projects was 283 participants compared to a target of 200. Most of the enrollments are for English language instruction; some are for adult basic education. Like Families That Work, this project will reach its full enrollment target.



Workplace Basics is targeting low wage workers almost entirely because it provides the training in the workplace. Workplace Basics has a target to work with 45 employers in developing projects. Through the fall quarter thirteen projects were started with 11 employers. Over time, it will work more with employers from pre-employment programs so that it can provide services to the WorkFirst workers who are hired.



Outcome Goal: SBCTC has set a target that 300 workers (75 percent of those enrolled) will complete their training by June 30, 1999. Completion is based upon the specific focus at the individual workplace. Workers and supervisors satisfaction with the training is surveyed at the end of each training project. Completions will begin to be reported in winter quarter for training projects that finished in fall. Post-program employment and earnings for all workers who complete by June 30, 1999 will be reported in January 2000.

CONCLUSIONS

The first WorkFirst programs integrating training into the WorkFirst "any job" strategy began full implementation this fall. One program, Tuition Assistance, had some earlier enrollments. The total enrollment for fall quarter in all four programs was about 1,600 students. The two basic skills programs will exceed their enrollment goals. Tuition assistance enrollments are increasing and the program can reach most if its goal if it continues its present rate of growth. Pre-employment training, however, is significantly below goal.

There has been a swing in college enrollments from serving welfare students to serving more students who were formerly on welfare. Overall, as welfare student headcounts have fallen, more former welfare students have been enrolling in school to help them stay off welfare and be more employable. This change reinforces the need to focus on low-income students in the wage and skill progression strategy.

The way welfare students are being served is changing as well for those who may be working and for those who may be the so-called harder-to-serve. More welfare students are receiving evening instruction. WorkFirst students receiving tuition assistance are even more likely to be attending evenings. On the other hand, the percentage needing basic skills instruction is also increasing, indicating the hard-to-serve group may be even more in need of training before going to work.

Subsequent reports will focus on outcomes including employment and earnings.